

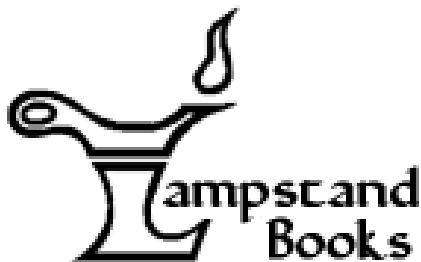
**Nordstrom
Nakefish
and the
Great Flying
Noodlenergle**



Richard Leonard

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Great Flying
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For My Grandchildren

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All characters in this story are fictional.
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“Wake up, Nordstrom! Wake up, Natasha! Don’t you remember what day this is?”

Nordstrom Nakefish stirred, yawned a few times, then stumbled out of bed. Why was Grandma waking him, and not his mother or father? Then he remembered — his parents had gone on a business trip, and Grandma was staying with him and his younger sister while they were away.

Nordstrom was still sleepy. He had stayed up late the night before, leafing through his books about the Great Flying Noodlenergle. Nordstrom was really nuts about the Noodlenergle, like some kids are crazy about football, or computer games, or model cars, or texting their friends. Nordstrom had a big collection of pictures of the Noodlenergle. He even had an operator’s manual his dad had sent away for, and a set of CAD/CAM designs and performance graphs.

Nordstrom had seen the Noodlenergle flying over Crackerville a few times, on its way to somewhere else. But he had never seen the Noodlenergle up close. That was about to change — today the Great Flying Noodlenergle would be coming to Crackerville for the annual Gooseberry and Flypaper Festival!

The festival was Crackerville’s big yearly celebration. Other nearby towns had their special times, like Deer Crossing Days or the Widespot Rodeo. But people in Crackerville thought those people in Widespot or Deer Crossing must find such ho-hum events pretty boring. Nothing could be as exciting as their own Gooseberry and Flypaper Festival. After all, the town that called itself the “Flypaper Capital of the U.S.A.” had to have a really big celebration. And when you add Podunk County’s famous gooseberry harvest to that — well, the festival drew thousands each year. It was what put Crackerville on the map.

Grandma had spent the week getting ready for the festival, too. Natasha had been helping her in the kitchen as she put up gooseberry jam and baked gooseberry pies. She even made some gooseberry ice cream, with Nordstrom's help to turn the crank on the ice cream maker.

Almost every home in Crackerville had something to bring to the festival, and the Crackerville Merchants and Manufacturers Association would be giving out prizes for the best creations. Grandma was hoping her pie would finally take first prize. "After all," she declared, "Mabel Stoopnagel shouldn't win the ribbon every year! It's time they gave it to somebody else." Try as she might, Grandma had never been able to beat her neighbor in the pie contest. Of course, the fact that Mrs. Stoopnagel's nephew Delbert was one of the judges had nothing to do with that.

"Nordstrom, are you up?" the voice called again from downstairs.

"Yes, Grandma, I'm up." It's true, Nordstrom wasn't quite up and dressed — he was still day-dreaming about the Noodlenergle. But since Grandma was downstairs in the kitchen and he was upstairs in his bedroom, he really was "up" in relation to her. He wasn't lying.

Nordstrom grabbed the Noodlenergle operator's manual for one last peek. It fell open to the page that described the supercalifabrilator. It was a vital part of the Noodlenergle's flight system, and if it wasn't working right the Noodlenergle could never get off the ground. Nordstrom had practically memorized the page, with its diagrams, but he went over it once again.

Then, laying the manual on his desk, he dressed in a hurry. He thought of wearing his Noodlenergle propeller beanie today, but because other kids sometimes made fun of it he decided on a baseball cap instead. Once dressed,

he rushed down to share Grandma's delicious breakfast with Natasha. Soon they were in Grandma's 1972 Plymouth Valiant and on their way to the fair grounds, where the Gooseberry and Flypaper Festival was in progress.

They helped Grandma set up her booth, with jars of gooseberry jam and a row of pies. The ice cream was packed away in an iced cooler, but Natasha had made a sign for Grandma so that people would know it was available.



Nordstrom gets ready to go to the festival.

By the time they were through helping Grandma the festival was in full swing. There were gooseberry booths all along Grandma's row. Most booths had pies. Mabel Stoopnagel's table was at the far end of the row, near the special landing area for the Noodlenergle. But many booths

had other creations besides pies or jam. One booth had gooseberry yogurt, while another had gooseberry juice. A third booth was selling gooseberry sparkler. Carbo's Bakery displayed pans of gooseberry bars. Flossie's Boutique had a big display of gooseberry spray perfume, and Acme Hardware was offering gooseberry glue. Chang's Chinese Wok had a new item this year, gooseberry stir-fry.

Nordstrom and Natasha walked back and forth along Grandma's row, checking out the booths. There was a good crowd today; people had come from far and near to take part in Crackerville's annual celebration. Gooseberries are okay, thought Nordstrom — especially in Grandma's pies — but after a while gooseberry this and gooseberry that can get a little boring.

And then Nordstrom heard the sound everyone had been waiting to hear. "*Wurgly-burgly, wurgly-burgly, WURGLY-BURGLY.*" The Great Flying Noodlenergle was coming!

Nordstorm and Natasha quickly made their way toward the landing area, which had been fenced off. They watched breathlessly as the wonderful machine came down to a gentle landing. "*WURGLY-BURGLY, wurgly-burgly, wurgly-burgly, wurg-erp!*" The engine stopped, and the great rotor on top of the sphere spun to a halt. The hatch opened and the pilot emerged.

Mayor Virgil Throckmorton spoke into a microphone, but nobody could hear him. Then somebody twisted a knob on the PA system controls.

"Testing, 1-2-3. Okay, can you hear me? Good. Well, we welcome the Great Flying Noodlenergle to Crackerville, and to the Gooseberry and Flypaper Festival. It's a great honor to have this remarkable machine visit our town." The mayor went on, mentioning the progress Crackerville

had made under his administration — the rerouting of U.S. Highway 345, which just happened to go by the gas station owned by the mayor's cousin; the new Ebenezer Throckmorton Elementary School, named in honor of one of Crackerville's pioneer settlers; the Throckmorton Subdivision, where large homes were being built that would add to the town's tax base. The crowd began to grow restless, and the mayor handed the microphone to Gerald Klunk, owner of Jerry-Bilt Products, one of Crackerville's factories.

"We have a special surprise for you," Mr. Klunk began. "The Crackerville Merchants and Manufacturers Association has arranged with the Noodlenergle to offer rides today for the young people of our town. The price is only seventy-five dollars each. One person at a time can go up; who will be the first?"

Nordstrom's heart sank. How he would love to go up in the Great Flying Noodlenergle — but seventy-five dollars? The lawn-mowing money he had saved was not nearly enough. Mom and Dad were out of town, and Grandma surely would not loan him seventy-five dollars for such a silly and unsafe thing as a flight in a Noodlenergle!

But Nordstrom and Natasha waited and watched while some of their friends' parents paid for Noodlenergle rides. First to go up, of course, was Carrie Klunk, Gerald Klunk's daughter. Then Natasha's friend Emma Case, daughter of the insurance agent Justin Case, took her ride. Next to fly was Nordstrom's classmate Colin Auskopee, the doctor's son.

When Farnsworth Fauntleroy, whose father was Crackerville's wealthiest citizen, took his turn Nordstrom decided he had seen enough. He would never have his Noodlenergle ride! He might as well visit some of the other

exhibits at the festival while Natasha went back to help Grandma with her gooseberry booth.

The wind was starting to blow a little, but Nordstrom was not worried. He knew that the Noodlenergle was designed to operate in all kinds of weather. He decided to check out the flypaper exhibits.

The factories of Crackerville had their finest products on display, with rolls of flypaper hanging from frames over their booths. Besides the standard flypaper for which the town was famous, there was special flypaper made just for the festival. One booth had peach-flavored flypaper to trap fruit flies. Another factory had made flypaper with a picture of St. George, to catch dragonflies. Nordstrom spotted flypaper interlaced with oats, designed especially for horseflies. Letterman's Print Shop had made calendar flypaper to attract May flies and, perhaps, June bugs. No one, of course, offered yellow flypaper, because no one cared to trap butterflies.

But Crackerville's latest advance in flypaper was a new design by Gerald Klunk. Jerry-Bilt Products had just rolled out an especially gooey flypaper made with — of course! — gooseberry glue. Spirals of it were hanging above the factory's booth, and huge flies were swarming to it. Once caught, they were dying like flies.

Amidst all the hubbub around the flypaper displays, Nordstrom had almost forgotten his disappointment over the Noodlenergle rides — but not quite. He turned to see what the Noodlenergle was doing. It was just coming back down toward the landing with its latest passenger, whoever that was.

And then something happened. The wind picked up, and the spirals of flypaper began to twist in the breeze. A sudden strong gust tore off some of the especially sticky

flypaper from the Jerry-Bilt Products booth, and sent it flying through the air. At the same time it blew down a plywood panel behind the gooseberry perfume at Flossie's Boutique. The panel landed squarely on top of the spray



The Noodlenergle crash-lands on Mabel Stoopnagel's pies.

bottles, sending a greenish cloud of gooseberry perfume into the air. Nordstrom watched, horrified, as both flypaper and perfume were blown right into the path of the descending Noodlenergle.

The craft's engine sputtered as the thick perfume reached its air intake, and the rotor was fouled by strands of sticky flypaper. Its landing was thrown off course, and

down it came — right on top of Mabel Stoopnagel's booth, making a shambles of all her gooseberry pies!

Nordstrom joined the crowd that quickly gathered around the mishap. Fortunately everyone had been able to get out of the way in time, and nobody in the Noodlenergle was injured. The only injury was to poor Mrs. Stoopnagel's feelings. The Noodlenergle wasn't damaged, but its hull was covered with gooseberry goo. Before long the mayor's cousin brought his tow truck and pulled the Noodlenergle back into its proper landing area, where the pilot and some volunteers began to clean up the mess and peel the flypaper off the rotor.

Mayor Throckmorton grabbed the microphone again to announce that the Noodlenergle seemed to be in working order and the rides would resume. The pilot took in his next passenger and started the engine. But the craft lifted only a few feet off the ground, then settled back to earth. The pilot tried again with the same result. Somehow, though the engine and rotor were all right, the Noodlenergle was unable to take off.

Nordstrom pushed through the crowd to the fence to get a better look. As far as he could tell, the Noodlenergle was in good shape. But from where he stood he could see only one side of the craft's spherical fuselage. Working his way around, he came to a place where he could get a good look from the other side. And he saw immediately what was wrong.

"I must tell the pilot what the trouble is!" he said to himself. Making his way back to the entrance to the landing area, he tried to get to the pilot. But the mayor and Gerald Klunk stood in the way.

"No admittance," snarled Mr. Klunk.

“But I need to talk to the pilot,” cried Nordstrom.

“Sorry,” said the mayor. “Authorized personnel only beyond this point.” And he gestured to a sign that read, AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY BEYOND THIS POINT.

Nordstrom was about to say, “That’s not fair. It was partly Mr. Klunk’s flypaper that caused the accident in the first place.” But he thought better of it. Surely there must be some way to get to the pilot, despite Mr. Klunk and the mayor.

Perhaps he could climb the fence. He circled the landing area once again till he came to a place where some nearby trees blocked the crowd’s view. The fence here was wire mesh, hard to climb, but maybe he could climb a tree and drop into the landing area.

However, he was halfway up the tree when Farnsworth Fauntleroy drove by on his four-wheeler and saw him. Farnsworth blew his horn and shouted, “Get down, you idiot! Authorized personnel only! Can’t you read, stupid?” With the attention Farnsworth had attracted, Nordstrom had to abandon his idea.

“There’s only one way to get in,” he thought, “and I’ll need Natasha’s help.” He ran to Grandma’s booth to get his sister.

Natasha was in the middle of helping some customers, but finally Nordstrom was able to draw her aside and explain his plan. They made some excuse to go back to the Noodlenergle. Nordstrom could tell that Grandma was a little suspicious, but customers were waiting and she had to let the kids go without objecting too strongly.

When they got to the entrance to the landing they found a crowd of kids, with their parents, still waiting for their Noodlenergle ride. “Good,” said Natasha. “That will be even better for our plan.”

Nordstrom stayed hidden in the crowd, but Natasha stepped boldly to the front of the line. Standing there near her father was Carrie Klunk.

“So, trying to weasel the pilot out of another ride? That’s not fair!”

“What do you mean, Natasha? I wasn’t —”

“One ride’s not enough for you? You have to cut into the line again? You should wait your turn!”

“Natasha, that’s not like you. Whatever —?”

The boy who was really next in line started to say something, but Natasha cut him off. “This snotty kid think’s she’s the queen today, just because her dad’s the big cheese here. Well, *la-tee-da!*”



Natasha picks a fight with Carrie Klunk.

Pretty soon the girls were shouting, and it looked like they were about to start pulling each other’s hair. A crowd

began to gather around them. Gerald Klunk burst out, "How dare you insult my daughter! You ought to be spanked!" Mayor Throckmorton tried to break up the tussle. "Girls, girls! Crackerville has always been a peaceful town. Let's not spoil the day with such an altercation!"

When the uproar was at its height Nordstrom saw his chance. No one noticed him slip through the gateway and head for the Noodlenergle. He hoped Natasha would come out okay. She would explain to Carrie later, and maybe she would understand.

The pilot was still poking around the Noodlenergle, a puzzled look on his face. Nordstrom tugged at his sleeve. "Excuse me, Mr. Pilot. Could I tell you something?"

"Can't you see I'm busy, trying to fix the Noodlenergle?"

Nordstrom persisted. "Yes, sir. But I know what's wrong with it!"

For a moment the pilot looked as if he was going to throw Nordstrom out himself. But then his face softened. "All right, young man. *We* certainly haven't been able to figure it out. If you have any ideas, let's hear them."

"It's the supercalifabrilator, sir. It's hypo-energized. Look, the oscillotometer has dropped out of elliptical plane."

The pilot surveyed his grounded craft, then replied. "You're exactly right, son! We can take care of that with a slight adjustment, using a reversible Allen wrench. We have a set in our toolbox — but how did you know it was the supercalifabrilator?"

Nordstrom explained how he had been fascinated by the Noodlenergle, and had studied the manual and the engineering designs.

"When we get the Noodlenergle working again," the pilot told him, "you'll be the first to go up in it."

By this time the mayor and Gerald Klunk had spotted Nordstrom and were striding toward the Noodlenergle.

“How did you get in there, kid?” fumed Mr. Klunk.

“You’re supposed to stay outside the fence!” the mayor puffed between breaths. “You need to leave now.”

The pilot held up his hand. “Gentlemen, this young man gets a free ride today. He’s fixed the Noodlenergle, and he’s entitled to it.”

There was nothing the mayor or Mr. Klunk could do but watch as Nordstrom entered the Noodlenergle with the pilot. With a triumphant “WURGLY-BURGLY, wurgly-burgly, *wurgly-burgly*” the craft was soon in the air, circling over Crackerville.

Nordstrom looked down through the porthole in wonder as they flew across the fairgrounds, with its tiny figures pointing up at the marvelous machine in the sky. They flew over his house, then around the water tower, then over Nordstrom’s school. When they flew past the church steeple, Nordstrom thought he could almost reach out and catch the rooster on the weathervane. It was great fun, and the best part was when the pilot let Nordstrom sit at the control panel — keeping a watchful eye over his shoulder, of course.

But at last the wonderful ride had to end. Down they came, back to the landing area, with one last “WURGLY-BURGLY, wurgly-burgly, *wurgly-burgly*.” Nordstrom stepped out of the hatch and the crowd began to clap. Mayor Throckmorton shook his hand. “Nordstrom Nakefish, you’re today’s hero, after all. You fixed the Noodlenergle, and you saved the day for the Gooseberry and Flypaper Festival. We’re so proud of you.”

As Nordstrom made his way toward the exit, to the cheers of the crowd, he saw that Grandma and Natasha

were waiting for him. Grandma wore a big smile. She was holding up a blue ribbon.

“Guess what happened while you were up in the air — they judged the gooseberry pies. And since all of Mabel Stoopnagel’s pies were smashed, she was disqualified. I won first prize!”



The pilot samples Grandma’s gooseberry pie.

Nordstrom gave her a big hug. “Grandma, that’s awesome! Congratulations!”

Natasha suddenly had another thought. “Grandma, when we get home, can we have a big piece of gooseberry pie? Just to celebrate?”

“Why, of course! In fact, why don’t I give each of you a piece, right now? I have some forks and paper plates right

here in my bag." In no time Nordstrom and his sister were enjoying a large slice of Grandma's delicious pie.

"Excuse me, ma'am." Nordstrom turned to face the Noodlenergle's pilot, who had followed him through the crowd. "Please, ma'am, I've been flying this thing all day, and I'm starved. Do you suppose I could have a piece of your pie?"

"Yes, you may!" answered Grandma. "In fact, you certainly deserve some pie. It was because you smashed Mabel Stoopnagel's pies that I got the blue ribbon." She sliced him a generous piece.

The pilot took a big bite, and smacked his lips. "Ma'am, I have to tell you this. When we crash-landed on that table of pies it made a big mess all over the Noodlenergle. I had to clean it up, and I tasted some of that pie. It was horrible — sour, and gummy, and full of seeds. But yours is the best gooseberry pie I've ever eaten. You would have won the blue ribbon anyway!"

Natasha spoke up. "And don't *I* get a free ride in the Noodlenergle, too? Didn't I do something to help?"

"Right-ho!" And, before Grandma could object, the pilot led Natasha through the hatch, and up they went.

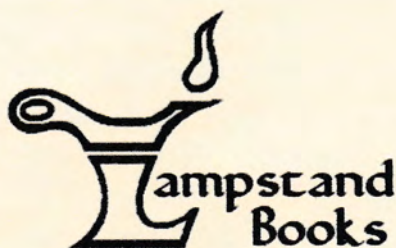
"What a great day!" exclaimed Nordstrom as the Noodlenergle soared above the fair grounds. And Grandma nodded, and smiled.

The pilot was still poking around the Noodlenergle, a puzzled look on his face. Nordstrom tugged at his sleeve. "Excuse me, Mr. Pilot. Could I tell you something?"

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Read what happens when the Great Flying Noodlenergle visits Crackerville's annual Festival – and enterprising young Nordstrom Nakedfish earns a special treat!



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